(1927)

Villa Corsica

May 11

My Billy,

So I am forgiven. What a relief: Even your stony & seasoned heart would be touched I think if you knew how anxiously I worked for a letter. But I was going to write to you even if you didn't forgive me, asking for a crumb though it would be. All my pride was humbled & I was eating dust at your feet in any case & all owing to the Lighthouse. I don't flatter myself that my literary opinion is really of any interest to you & it would be difficult or impossible to give it to you in a nutshell. In fact I think I am more incapable than any one else in the world of making an aesthetic judgment on it - only I know that I have somewhere a feeling about it as a work of art which will perhaps gradually take shape & which must be

enormously strong to make any impression on me at all beside the other feelings which you roused in me – I suppose I'm the only person in the world who can have those feelings, at any rate to such an extent. So though probably they don't matter to you at all you may be interested to know how much you did make me feel. Besides I daresay they do show something about aesthetic merits in your curious art of writing. Anyhow it seemed to me that in the first part of the book you have given a portrait of mother which is more like her to me than anything I could ever have conceived as possible. It is almost painful to have her so raised from the dead. You have made one feel the extraordinary beauty of her character, which must be

the most difficult thing in the world to do. It was like meeting her again with oneself grown up & on equal terms & it seems to me the most astonishing feat of creation to have been able to see her in such a way - you have seen father too / I think as clearly but perhaps / may be wrong. that isn't quite so difficult. There is more to catch hold of. Still it seems to me & to the only thing about him which ever gave a true idea. So you see as far as portrait painting goes you seem to me to be a supreme artist & it is so flattering to find myself face to face with those two again that I can hardly consider anything else. In fact for the last two days I have hardly been able to attend to daily life. Duncan & I have

talked about them, as each had a copy, whenever we could get alone together. Roger too furious at being out of it for us to be able to do so when he was there. I don't think it is only that I know them things that makes me feel all this. For Duncan who didn't know them says too that for the first time he understands matter. So your vision of her stands as a whole by itself & not only as reminding one of facts.

But I am very bad at describing my feelings - I daresay you'll understand. Then of course there is the relationship between the two, which perhaps is more your subject - but it is so mixed with the others that one can't feel only one alone. But that too is complete & seems to me to be understood & imagined as a whole - I agree with

Lenard, I think it is your best work. You see I can't quite avoid an opinion. I know that in spite of all my personal interest I shouldn't have been moved as I was if it hadn't moved me impersonally too, only at the moment I don't feel capable of much analysis. I am excited & thrilled & taken into another world as one only is by a great work of art, only now also it has this curious other interest which I can't help feeling too. I daresay you think all I've said nonsense. You can put it down to the imbecile ravings of a painter on paper. By the way surely Lily Brisco must have been rather a good painter. Before her time perhaps but with great gifts really? No. we didn't laugh at the

lots about painting - I think I'm a little doubtful about covering paints with damp cloths. but it might be done - But how do you make Boeuf en Daube? Does it have to be eaten on the moment after cooking 3 days?

I wonder how Adrian will like James! Perhaps you'll finish his psycho-analysis for him. I shouldn't be surprised.

Now being made a sufficient fool of myself I hope to please even you I will go on about less exciting subjects. Do see Clive. & Mary. & find out all you can - I suppose they're in each others arms again by now which will be dull.

Roger says Boyle or Buhl. no matter which - I don't think he ought to have any help in the matter. I wish me of the works you contemplate could be

given up to pure comedy. But I daresay you have no choice in the matter. Mrs White whom you call Wilson made us laugh a good deal too. Angelica says she went so to see Mr King as she knows he'd only say "it seems like yesterday since you were that size". Which I expect is true. It's rather hard on me to have to go & disillusion him since he can still see.

Roger is livelier than ever he lives at the Pensosi villa & has all meals but breakfast here. Helen comes next week. & a week after that, on the 25th I think we start home. I suppose I may stay a few days in Paris at least. I shall if I can induce Lucie to accompany Grace & Angelica to Gordon Sq. I rather dread the thought of returning to Ottoline & Co. I really believe may happier away & quite be so occupied with admirers that you won't notice

my arrival - Don't forget my
expedition to the Thames with Quentin
in June. to which you & Lenard
are invited. The group have
terribly bad taste it is true. but
after all so had I - Sargent &
Fred Walker still haunt me - &
as for poetry it is doubtful whether
I can be said to like it now. They
might to know better than we did
but they have their own lapses
Quentin has written me a short
stiff little letter. I say he saw
you & Picasso. whose latest work
impressed him enormously
I am distracted with my
plays & by Aunt Daisy's sudden
reappearance in Cassis -
Your P.S. just came - you
need not fear. I send no news
on to Clive. or any one else
This house is now a well of
absolute secrecy. miraculously mute.
Please tell Lenard not to bother
any more about Hogben
Your VW

T. PARSONS 3.2.23

(150) (1927)

Villa Corsica
Cassis Bouches du Rhône

My Billy.

Don't tell me that my letter to you has never arrived. I wrote you a long letter more than a week ago. 10 days I think. telling you as well as I could what I thought of the Lighthouse. If it is lost I fear you may never know all my many & complicated feelings on the subject - not that I succeeded in expressing them very well - nor that I put but very definite aesthetic judgments I dared to make. However it really seems to me more likely that amidst the torrent of letters of admiration you receive by every post mine has passed unnoticed. In any case all your sarcasms fell on stony ground. Both the poor dumb creatures had read the book in 3 days. a record I

should think. Duncan has written to, but didn't dare to send the letter till yesterday I believe. Please let me know if mine really doesn't reach you & if you want to know what I think it is & I'll write you again. It will be the greatest possible tribute to your genius I can pay if I do as you know that I find nothing more difficult than putting my sentiments into words & them on to paper.

We now have the Fry here - Helen said she had telephoned to you but you didn't seem to want to see her. "Impossible" said Roger - I looked the other way. Both are living at the Ministry & have nearly been so we are rather crowded again. But it won't be for long, as we have now in less than a week. I dare not think of departure & all that it means. But our tickets are taken & we

have decided to go on Wednesday
sleep one night at Lyons. which
seems the easiest way to manage
& get to Paris on Thursday evening
There of course my address will
be the Hotel de Londres.

I've had a very gloomy letter
but no explanation of it. From
Clive. from Seend. It's difficult
to understand what's going on
now - why does he see Mary
if it makes him so gloomy?
I wish you'd get confidences
from her. I think he ought
either to patch it up completely
or fly. I rather expect that
Lytton knows all about it.
Could you get the latest news
from him?

How much I prefer to hear
from you about Kaiser, the Keynes
Ottoline & all rather than see
them myself. It seems such
a good plan in every way. For
you see Kaiser setting a most
interesting figure at a window

where I might only be irritated by her stickers: physical & temperamental. You will have to work much longer for your picture so take me all you can before the dull reality thrusts itself upon me.

By the way I never did tell Clive anything about your complaints of his drinks. I don't know how anything can possibly have reached him, unless Dadie or someone saw that you were annoyed & went straight back to him — or his own bad conscience pricked him. Anyhow I am innocent. In fact I've had very little communication with him since he left.

Perhaps you will have had my letter by now & I shall have said all the wrong things & made you furious & I will think the best thing to do is to pretend you've never had it — I can't quite believe Hester's marriage. No doubt the wedding surprises me now. I hope she'll get America. Write soon & tell me what you do

Love V

(51)

1927

Hotel de Londres

May 27

My Billy.

I send this note by Grace who goes back with Angelica tomorrow Saturday. I got your letter just before leaving Cassis & another here. So I feel well treated. It was however a great relief to hear as I had really begun to fear I had said something terrible. One never knows with intensely susceptibilities. Apparently I didn't - & I daresay if wanted to I shall find plenty more to say on the aesthetic question later - just to keep your attention.

I will let you know as soon as I can when we return

as far as I'm concerned it will be some time before the end of next week. But we can hardly tell when yet as we have been in such a rush all today we've not had time to find out what there is to be seen & done here. As it was suddenly discovered that today was the last day on which Louie's return ticket was available she had to be packed off in a hurry & we had to spend today getting money, tickets & clothes for Grace etc. It is now pouring hard & Paris is not very attractive. But these days pass for us however. They I think very much like those

I live on arrival. Let me take my chance. I let you know as soon as I can.

Clive writes that he is unreasonably miserable! What is it all about? He says he wants to talk however so I suppose I shall hear all soon. Mary has sent Duncan the last instalment for the decorations –

I really can't face Lisa & Mr King on my return – what with blasts from the past. I'd much rather let them through you.

Your niece (I can't help

it if you think me too
maternal) will be in London
on Sunday & perhaps will
see her for a minute – She is in
high spirits & today when choosing
her new clothes at Lafayettes which
she did with great decision she
suddenly gave an exclamation of
joy. the dancing in the middle
of the shop, collected a crowd
of young women round her
seized me & then in her
arms & was such a success
that we could hardly get away
she carries on like this with
all the French who are most
responsive – Is it her de l'Etang
blood? I wish I had such vigour
as I can snuggle through

Yours VB

to tea & stayed hours. I don't really like him in spite of & because of his adoring admiration for you. He seems to think he has launched you in France. If you become a best seller & your books & films & things you will be far richer than I. I don't think I shall ever touch a penny of my reputed wealth - Your VB.

Sunday
24 July 1927

My Billy.

I only got here yesterday. I found your letter - I couldn't write or telegraph today. Being Sunday. But am sending a telegram early tomorrow which may possibly reach you in time & be of use - Please go & say if its any good to you. You will find Louie, Grace. Angelica & Julian. You can have my room & they will be delighted & provide anything you want I am sure. I am writing to Louie to say you may come. But neither you nor she will probably hear in time, so I can only hope you will have come & demanded a bed.

Duncan went to bed with a bad sore throat & temperature & after last year illness I was rather alarmed. We had to put off coming here till Saturday in consequence. He is all

right again now & we are at work once
more - I shall return / expect on
Friday. Our plan is that Bunny should
come over with the cars on Tuesday,
drive to some place further South, where
Duncan will meet him & they go on
to Paris together. We have had great
difficulties however about making all
necessary arrangements & I daresay
Bunny won't get over so soon. But
in any case I shall return on Friday.
I hope to see you soon after - It's
all very well to look at us for not passing
our driving exam. but let me advise you
when you go in for yours - if you ever do -
not to try at Brighton - at least not on
a day on which the rain is doing more
driving than you can hope to do - You
will probably find a very young &
uppish man who accuses you of not
being able to change gear quietly on
every occasion - That was my fault -
but when I asked him to remedy it,
also failed he continued to remain it,
my fault when I conduct & the cars
when he conducts. However I'll tell you
all about that when I see you - Luckily

(152 ii)

it doesn't matter as I don't want to dine till after Christmas, nor does Duncan really, so we shall both have to get passed in London (alas).

Your gossip about Clive was very interesting - He hasn't said a word to me beyond mysterious hints. I do dont some how much believe in the (lady) being Valerie Taylor - though it might be - but he has spoken rather disparagingly of her lately. But do find out if you can. I expect Vanessa knows - Of course all Clive's affairs will come out before long - he can't keep it to himself - & then there'll be an awful row I expect.

He has quite given up having a car & Fred. We had rather a time over that as Fred nearly got dismissed by Lady B. & then Clive wouldn't have

him & Lonie was in despair - Its all right now - at least Fred is staying on with Lady B. Did you tell Nellie about it? Lonie was very much upset because Nellie asked her about it. After I I confess I say I hadn't told you but I hoped you hadn't said anything to her - B Lonie doesn't want Alice & the Hawtreys & all to know that Fred nearly left Lady B. not that Clive thinks I of having him & then wouldn't -

Please tell Lennard that I got the MS of Kew Gardens 2 days before coming here - I don't suppose I can do much if anything here - but I'll do it as soon as I can after getting back. If the cover is to be lithographed I must either have a proof or draw it myself Roger says the men at the place who copies drawings would be quite hopeless.

Roger was here when we arrived. Today he has gone off to meet Helen who was to come to Dieppe. They rich spend some days & then I still & Nan & Ethel are to be brought face to face by Roger - I can't imagine how they'll get on. The ladies of Arqueyard are much as usual & so is the food. Today the Blanches came

(153)

Cleeve House Christmas Day (1927)

My dearest Wolves.

I am simply overwhelmed by your presents. You have given me all that a woman of fashion such as myself could desire & I shall face the world with perfect self confidence. Though why you should have given me so many presents I can't think. Really I feel that my family gets far too much from you. Angelica's delight over her watch is indescribable. I had to give it her while I was still in bed this morning & she was so much excited that for once in her life she remained silent. It is really a very pretty little watch & as she says far superior to Swiss. She has gone to church with Mrs Bell! fearfully pleased with herself, her watch, a new umbrella & a new bag. Altogether she alone thoroughly enjoys herself & the whole affair. She chatters away, enters Tams the Miss Bollens to tea. sets into lunch with all the servants indoors & out, takes the dogs out, attends family prayers, looks for first snowdrops. Quentin is bored to death & I am reconciled only by the relief of not having to deal with burst pipes & missing turkeys as usual at this moment. I shall

Could use outside when they are in a hurry in shooting mornings? 2. 1933 B. asked me in private So I said I wished to & would [illegible] umbrella? Yes, 1933 W. asked me in private would it- is wanted me to have tea with 3 Miss Billings yesterday & thank me for my dearest sister V13

(153)

Cleeve House Christmas Day (1927)

My dearest Wolves.

I am simply overwhelmed by your presents. You have given me all that a woman of fashion such as myself could desire & I shall face the world with perfect self confidence. Though why you should have given me so many presents I can't think. Really I feel that my family gets far too much from you. Angelica's delight over her watch is indescribable I had to give it her while I was still in bed this morning & she was so much excited that for once in her life she remained silent. It is really a very pretty little watch & as she says far superior to Jwitchy's. She has gone to church with Mrs Bell & fearfully pleased with herself, her watch, a new umbrella & a new bag. Altogether she alone thoroughly enjoys herself & the whole affair. She chatters away, enters Jams the Miss Bottoms to tea. sets into lunch with all the servants indoors & out, takes the dogs out, attends family prayers, works for first snowdrops. Quentin is bored to death & I am reconciled only by the relief of not having to deal with burst pipes & missing turkeys as usual at this moment. I shall

Could use outside when they are in a hurry in shooting days. 2. 1933 B. asked me in private so I said I would try & make room underground. You, 1933 W. might have your world it-is Wanted in me. It really you could have 3 kiss
By Ivan yesterday
Goodbye & thank you
& many
dessted
old
sister
Vi B

soon however be past the worst. Tomorrow Clive & I & Cory drive over to Ham Spray for lunch where we shall find Lytton alone, all the rest of them having gone off for the day, on Thursday I go to Swan.. at Cheltenham for the night, on Saturday we return to London - you will have gone I am afraid. I imagine you now sitting comfortably over your fire, remote from the horrors of the season. or are you setting out to dine with Sumbo & eating a Quaker meal with Roger. Any are better than the interminable meals here (though one course has been cut out from dinner since Mrs Bells' death, which otherwise has made no difference as far as I can see) There is a new cook, in the same lines but not so good as the old one - Mrs Bell starts to be because she is only 28 but as it is almost impossible now to get a cook in the country she keeps her. Also one under housemaid is ill, so the staff is slightly understaffed in the early morning, but later in the day a woman comes to help. Meek, the parlourmaid is unchanged, so is Ellen the house-maid. so are Overs the chauffeur & William the ancient coachman. & Eyres the gardener & many under-lings whom I have not grasped. Mrs Bell rules them all & does her accounts in the dining room in the morning & carries her keys about & walks up the house at night. I don't believe anything will ever change this house. "Could you manage to hint to the boys that there is another lavatory they